

NAME: Morita, Jiro DATE OF BIRTH: 1892 PLACE OF BIRTH: Shizuoka  
Age: 80 Sex: M Marital Status:   Education: Graduated from Cal-Tech in  
engineering

## PRE-WAR:

Date of arrival in U.S.: 1/1909 Age: 16 M.S.Y.Y. Port of entry: San Fran.  
Occupation/s: 1. Student/School boy 2. Grocery Business 3.  
Place of residence: 1. San Francisco, Ca. 2. Pasadena, Ca. 3.  
Religious affiliation: Christian Church (Treasurer)  
Community organizations/activities: Member of the Japanese Association &  
Member of the Shizuoka Kenjin Kai.

## EVACUATION:

Name of assembly center: Tulare, California  
Name of relocation center: Gila River W.R.A. Center, Arizona  
Dispensation of property: Home - rented; Store-Leased Names of bank/s: \_\_\_\_\_  
Jobs held in camp: 1. Truant officer in Social Welfare office 2. Chairman of the  
Jobs held outside of camp: Domestic Worker (House-boy) Boy Scouts  
Left camp to go to: Omaha, Nebraska (In 1943)

## POST-WAR:

Date returned to West Coast: 1945  
Address/es: 1. Omaha, Nebraska 2. Lincoln, Nebraska  
3. 950 Sharo Ct., Pasadena, California  
Religious affiliation: Christian Church  
Activities: 1. Member of J.A.C.I. 2. 3.  
If deceased, date, place and age at time of death: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of interviewer: Osamu Miyamoto Date: 6/12/72 Place: Pasadena, Ca.  
Translator: Yisuki Akanatsu

NAME: JIRO MORITA

AGE: 80

DATE OF BIRTH: 1892

PLACE OF BIRTH: Shizuoka Ken

YEAR OF ENTRY INTO THE USA: 1909, 17 years old

MAJOR OCCUPATION: Business

CAMP: Gila River

Date of Interview; June 12, 1972

Place of Interview; Pasadena, California

INTERVIEWER: Osamu Miyamoto

TRANSLATOR (TRANSCRIBER): Yasuka Akamatsu

Mr. Jiro Morita, 950 Sharon Ct. Pasadena, Calif.

Age: 80

Interviewed by Dr. Miyamoto of First Presbyterian Church,  
Altadena, Calif.

Q: Please tell me where you were born?

A: I was born in Katase, Izu, Shizuoka-Ken, Japan.

Q: When were you born?

A: In 1892.

Q: How old are you now?

A: 80 years old.

Q: Do you remember of any war while you were growing up in Japan?

A: Yes, I remember the war between Russia and Japan. I remember that my relative went to fight in the war and that Japan won. And I remember that the peace treaty was signed in Newport, Rhode Island and the president of the U.S. was Roosevelt.

Q: I understand that you were in the U. S. Army during WWI.

Were you a citizen of the U.S.A?

A: No, I was not a citizen. I was studying at Cal-Tech. The institution was turned over to the U.S.A Army so I volunteered myself to be in the Army and kept on my studies. We drilled and being an engineer, we learned how to build bridges and etc.

Q: You were a student at Cal-Tech at the time. What were you majoring in?

A: Electrical Engineering.

Q: Was it unusual for a Japanese to be in college at that time?

A: Yes, I was the only one. In my days, among caucasians only 8% or 10% went to high school. They quit school when they finished grammar school and went to work because jobs were available.

Q: Did you go to high school?

A: Yes, I graduated Pasadena High School in 1915.

Q: How old were you when you came to U.S.A.?

A: I was 16 years and 10 months old.

Q: When you were in Japan, do you remember of any earthquakes, tidal waves or plagues?

A: Not a big one. Since I got married, there was a big earthquake in Tokyo.

Q: What was the religion of your family in Japan?

A: I would say partly Buddhism and partly Christian.

Q: Would you explain that?

A: My father was not quite a Buddhist nor not quite a Christian but my aunt was a Christian. I heard Christian sermons while I

was in high school in Japan near Shimoda.

Q: Did you have contact with lot of Christians then?

A: No, once in a while I went to a church in Shimoda.

Q: Did you hear from missionaries?

A: I think it was from a Japanese minister. Our high school invited Buddhist priests and christian ministers. Shimoda was the first port opened to Americans. That's the reason we received Christian religion earlier than most people in Japan.

Q: When you left Japan in 1909 as a teenager, what was your family situation like?

A: My father was here in America already. He studied at Keio University (Keio Gijuku then) but when my grandfather lost money in shipping business, he decided to quit school, come to America and make some money. Grandfather lost his ships in a big storm and was in debt.

Q: Did you have brothers and sisters?

A: Yes, I had an older brother, a younger sister and a younger brother.

Q: Did they come to the United States?

A: No, I'm the only one. My grandfather was a scholar, my father studied in a college and my older brother was attending college. I being the second son, I thought I should come to the United States and start on my own.

Q: In Japan, did you go to grammar school and high school?

A: Yes, I completed grammar school and attended high school but I left when I had a year more to go.

Q: What grade did they put you in when you came to America?

A: I spoke a little English so they put me in the 7th grade. I went to grammar school one and half years.

Q: From there, did you go to high school? They did not have junior high school then.

A: Yes. The reason I was able to converse some in English was because I studied under a man and a lady English conversation teacher in Tokyo in preparation to come to this country.

Q: Did you learn English in Japan? Was it formal English?

A: Yes, it was formal English.

Q: Did you find it hard to converse when you came here?

A: No, not that hard because when I was young, my brother and I went to the Yokohama pier and talked to foreigners. The day after I arrived in America, I think it was a Saturday in the month of February, I played baseball with new friends I had made. At the grammar school, I ran the 100 and 200 yard dash for the school. I was right in there. I had lots of fights with other boys but I wasn't scared.

Q: Why did you fight with them?

A: They were big and I was small, but they picked on me. I didn't take it sitting down.

Q: The reason you came to America was to join your father who was here already, When was this?

A: IN January 1909.

Q: Did you come via Hawaii?

A: Yes.

Q: Did you have chance to do some sightseeing in Hawaii?

A: Not much. I was on the "Shunyo Maru" the best steamship at that time. I had an introduction (from a relative who was with another ship company) to the captain of "Shunyo-Maru" and was treated very well on the ship.

Q: Do you remember how many were on the ship?

A: Quite a few landed in Hawaii. About 6 of us men came over to the U.S. The rest were picture brides.

Q: Did Hawaii impress you?

A: No, only that I notice people were swimming in the winter and divers went after the nickels and dimes we threw from the ship.

Q: Didn't you want to get off at Hawaii?

A: No, I had someone waiting for me here.

Q: Do you recall the type of people who were on the ship?

A: The immigration law was already in effect and only students and merchants were able to come.

Q: Was this a regular passengers ship?

A: Yes, it was one of the best passenger steam ships.

Q: Do you recall any incidents that happened on the ship?

A: Don't recall anything particular but they made me wear a coat and tie to eat at the second class dining room which I didn't like.

Q: Did you have to do that to eat in the second class dining room?

A: Yes. It might have been the first class, I'm not sure.

Q: How did the ladies dress?

A: There weren't any with us.

Q: Then you were the only Japanese second class passengers?

A: Yes. I don't know whether I was on the first or second class.

Q: Then the other Japanese were third class passengers weren't they?

A: Yes. I was in there, too, but they came after me.

Q: How many weeks did it take you on the ship to come here?

A: 17 days.

Q: What kind of thoughts ran through your mind while traveling?

A: I thought I had to work my way through when I came to America but I would be able to make it.

Q: Did you have other relatives besides your dad here?

A: My uncle was here. My dad returned to Japan in the spring of 1911. I came to Pasadena in August of the same year.

Q: What was your first impression of America?

A: Nothing definite. I had some ambition.

Q: Did you land in San Francisco?

A: Yes, and I had to study very hard. Someone I knew who was about 2 years ahead of me in Japan was still studying in the 5th or 6th grade in grammar school. I was ahead of him over here and I had to study that much harder.

Q: Were you impressed of the buildings?

A: Yes, but San Francisco was still torn down. Fairmont Hotel was the only big building that was up.

Q: Was this after the earthquake?

A: I came in 1909 but the buildings were not reconstructed as yet.

Q: When you came off the ship, do you recall how the immigration officer treated you?

A: There weren't many of us so we didn't have to wait very long.

Q: Were they courteous to you? Did you talk in English and were they surprised?

A: I don't know. I think I used some English.

Q: Was your father in San Francisco?

A: Yes.

Q: Did you live with him?

A: No. I lived with a friend of my father and within few months, I got a school boy job with a caucasian family and went to school from there. Others did the same.

Q: Before you came, you had your mind made up that you were going to go to school.

A: Yes, that's it.

Q: In San Francisco, how did white people treat you?

A: I made lot of friends in school, especially the younger children because I could protect them from the bigger ones.

Q: Did you know "Judo?"

A: Yes, once I threw a boy over my shoulder. The teacher asked me why I did it. I did it because the other boy picked on me first and started the fight.

Q: Did they leave you alone after that?

A: Once, I had to take three boys all at once. One under my foot, one on my back and one in front. The teacher came and stopped

it. That's one I wouldn't take anything from anyone.

Q: Did any of the boys invite you to their house?

A: Yes, one fellow did. These incidents didn't happen very long. Within few months, I was everyone's friend. I was invited to participate in the track meet representing their school.

Q: Until what age did you go to school? Did you go to a high school in San Francisco?

A: I went to Royal High School in San Francisco one month. Then I moved to Pasadena, because my uncle lived here. I graduated Pasadena High School in 1915.

Q: Did you apply to Cal-Tech after that?

A: Yes.

Q: While you were single, did anything special happen?

A: I took out girls once in a while like the other boys. On graduation night, about a dozen of us went to a soda fountain to have ice cream and soda. The waiter didn't wait on me. Others asked why and his reply was that they didn't serve Japanese. Then the whole gang left the place because they were prejudiced against me. I was their friend. I was in the senior ball and all of the activities with them. They couldn't stand such action.

Q: Did you attend church at that time?

A: Yes.

Q: Was it a Japanese church?

A: Yes, usually I went to a Presbyterian Church on Madison and Colorado streets but it's torn down now.

Q: Anything else while you were attending school?

A: I remember there was a graduation beach party and a dance was going on but I didn't know how to dance. There was a Japanese student from another school and he was from Hawaii. He wanted to be introduced to my girl friend so I did. I sat out but I could have danced if I wanted to.

Q: Was she a Japanese girl?

A: No, she was caucasian. When I was at Los Angeles Junior College for a while, I played tennis with the team. Girls from Pasadena High School were there all pulling for me. I was just a regular guy.

Q: Did fellows resent your going out with white girls?

A: No, they laughed and tumbled around. I mingled with everybody. I think if you sit back and be alone, they'll pick on you. If you mingle with everyone, I think that solves the problem right there.

Q: During the time you were in school, were you working?

A: I was working.

Q: Were you pretty good financially?

A: Financially, I used to save one hundred dollars a year. That's equivalent to one thousand dollars today. In four years, I saved \$400.00 to go to college.

Q: What sort of work did you do?

A: I was able to cook so I got more salary than other school boys. If they got \$2.00, I got \$4.00. During summers, I did gardening work. I got room and board with it so I saved quite a bit.

Q: Did you work for a white family? Did you cook American food?

A: Yes, I did. When I was attending Los Angeles Junior College, I worked at the home of the city attorney. When I told them I had to leave because the place was too far from school, they asked me to stay two weeks longer to teach the new boy how to cook. That family was very strict. They had children of high school age. They were not allowed to call me by my first name. They had to call me Mr. Morita.

Q: In another words, they didn't want their children to boss you around.

A: Yes, they were told to respect me because of age and more advanced in school. That happened most everywhere I went. They gave me the front door key while the Japanese women house worker had to enter from the back door. When they had guests, I sat at the dining table with the rest of the family. They said I was part of the family.

Q: Were these families religious people?

A: Yes, I went to church together.

Q: When you were approaching graduation at Cal-Tech, what was in your thoughts?

A: Before graduation, I had to work to get more money. I went to the newspaper publisher "Examiner" to put an advertisement for work. They were helping veterans but told me they couldn't find a white collar job for me. There was prejudice there.

Q: Was it the Los Angeles Examiner?

A: Yes. Instead of going back to Cal-Tech, I went to work in a grocery store in Los Angeles. I think I worked about one year and then went on my own.

Q: You were living in Pasadena. How did you get to L.A.?

A: There was what we called P.E., the red car.

Q: How did you meet your wife?

A: She is my cousin but not related by blood.

Q: Was she here or in Japan?

A: She was in Japan.

Q: Was it "baishaku" (arranged by go-between)?

A: Parents arranged it while we were young and we ended up that way.

Q: Was she from your home town?

A: Yes.

Q: Was this arranged before you came to this country?

A: Yes, it was.

Q: Was the wedding performed here in Pasadena?

A: No. The ceremony was held in Japan and we were married in Seattle. I went to Seattle to meet her.

Q: What kind of ceremony was it in Seattle?

A: We went to a minister and got married.

Q: You probably had lots of friends who married picture brides.

Do you recall any stories relating to picture brides?

A: Well, among my friends I think everything worked out alright.

Q: There were no mistakes or anything like that?

A: That happened in L.A. but nothing like that in Pasadena.

Q: Did they have mistakes in L.A.?

A: I heard quite a bit.

Q: What happened in L.A.?

A: This is a second hand story. I heard a man sent a picture of himself to Japan which was taken when he was younger. When the bride came she found that he was an older man.

Q: The bride didn't want to get married?

A: They got married but had lot of rough times. I heard plenty of these kind of stories.

Q: Have you ever been homesick for Japan?

A: When I graduated high school, I wished my mother and father were here. Especially when I got my diploma. That's about the only time.

Q: You had knowledge of english before you came so you weren't as homesick as some others, were you?

A: I made many caucasian friends. I still mingle with them today. No Japanese mingled with caucasians like I do and they all like me.

Q: You followed the American way of life very easily, didn't you? That's very unusual.

A: Yes.

Q: Were there at anytime that you felt that it was difficult to get into American culture?

A: I felt some prejudice all along but I did not let it bother me. When WWII broke out, I was chosen a block leader and was the leader all along. My business was with Japanese but I had many white friends.

Q: Because of prejudice, did anyone try to attack you or anything like that?

A: No.

Q: The next question is how did you learn English. You learned English in Japan and came over here and picked up more at school and etcs.

A: Yes.

Q: Right after you finished school and got married, what kind of income did you get?

A: I was in grocery business and did fairly well.

Q: Were most of your customers Japanese?

A: I was able to buy rice and things like that by the carload so within few years, I made pretty good.

Q: When did you buy your first house?

A: That was in 1929 or 1930. I bought a house with store space in front.

Q: How much did you pay for something like that in those days?

A: About \$7,000.00.

Q: Would it be equivalent to \$30,000.00 or \$40,000.00?

A: Yes. If I sold it now, I think I could get \$35,000.00.

Q: Did you have problems in buying a house in those days?

A: Yes, when I was trying to buy a house before this one in

Oak Knoll district, the seller called and said his neighbors objected.

Q: Did you deal with a real estate company?

A: No, I read advertisements in the newspapers and dealt directly with the owner.

Q: Then you did everything on your own, didn't you?

A: Yes, when I bought this, the woman sold me this and went to live with her mother and told her that she sold the house to a Japanese. The mother asked whether the buyer's name was Morita and had attended Pasadena High School. She told her I did. It happened that I had quite an association with this person. The woman's brother made many truckloads of deliveries to my place. It's a small world.

Q: Were you in many Japanese associations?

A: I was a member in the Japanese Association and Shizuoka Kenjin Kai.

Q: Did they have J.A.C.L. at that time?

A: No, they didn't. I am a member of J.A.C.L. now.

Q: Were you a member of a church at that time?

A: I am a charter member of this church.

Q: Did they have a grocery association at that time?

A: No, I don't think they did.

Q: Did Japanese Association help you when needed?

A: I don't remember anything like that.

Q: You probably helped them.

A: They called on me quite a bit because I spoke English.

Q: Were you most active in Keniu Kai?

A: Yes. Before the war, I was treasurer of both the Japanese Association and the Christian Church. Because of the business, I had to mingle with everybody.

Q: Did they have picnics then?

A: Yes, the church had theirs and the association had theirs too.

Q: Did you do business with the Japanese?

A: Yes, about 99%.

Q: What type of entertainment and hobbies did you have? I know you liked gardening.

A: I liked human beings regardless of their race or creed. I liked to entertain people.

Q: You liked young people, too?

A: I liked young people. I liked basketball, baseball, and football games.

Q: I know you liked fishing, too, because I saw you. Can you tell me about some experience in raising your family?

A: (silence)

Q: You never liked segregated schools.

A: No, I didn't.

Q: Can you tell me about WWI and what you did?

A: I didn't do much. The Army took over Cal-Tech and in order to stay there, I had to volunteer into the Army. We had regular studies and besides that we had to learn about guns, building bridges, and etcs.

Q: Were you in the Engineer's Corps?

A: Cal-Tech was an engineer's school. Student Army didn't last very long because the war ended within 6 or 8 months. I had about 8 months of training.

Q: Your experience in WWI was only at Cal-Tech?

A: We just marched the streets.

Q: The next question, I think you have answered. When you first came in contact with Christianity. That was in Japan, wasn't it? During the Depression, what kind of hardship did you have?

A: I really had it hard. I bought a house and had to make payments. My customers bought on credit but I had to pay the wholesaler. I was caught in the middle and it was hard. I

discharged my two helpers and operated the business with the help of my wife and children.

Q: You didn't lose your house, did you?

A: No, I didn't.

Q: Did you say the grocery store was in front part of your house?

A: Yes.

Q: When you came to America, did you plan to stay here permanently or like some others, did you plan to return to Japan after you made your fortune?

A: My plan was to stay in America. I knew what Japan was like. In spite of prejudice here, I thought this was the place for me. Do you remember the Gettysburg speech? I knew it wasn't realized but I was hopeful and wanted to stay here.

Q: Did your dad feel the same way?

A: My dad, no. He just wanted to pay his debt and retain what he received from his ancestors. When he was able to accomplish this, he returned to Japan. One of my brothers is a graduate of Keio University and another graduated Waseda University. You can see that my family is well educated.

Q: When WWII broke out, on that Sunday, were you home?

A: I was out getting orders for the New Year from my customers. I was at the home of Mr. Fujita, heard the news, and rushed home.

Q: Do you recall "Pearl Harbor?"

A: It is hard to describe the shock. I always knew Japan had no chance against America. I never believed the propaganda from Japan. I knew how big Japan was and the capability of the U.S.

Q: On that day, aside from your feelings, did you think about your family?

A: Yes, I wanted to get back home right away. I had a caucasian neighbor, a submarine commander and he was on reserve. Before he left, he came to me and said he was not a rich man and asked if I would supply his family with groceries until he got his first pay check. He came to me when he knew a war might break out.

Q: Was he called before the war broke out?

A: Yes, before the Pearl Harbor attack. When war broke out he came and asked if anyone was bothering me.

Q: Did you get the feeling that your neighbors changed their attitude after the war broke out?

A: My neighbors didn't. They stuck with me. We are still friends. Some have died. One Frenchman asked me to take care of his funeral and estate after he died. He knew I was an honest man and all his relatives were after his money.

Q: In another words, all your neighbors were concerned for you?

A: Yes.

Q: When did you first find out about evacuation orders?

A: I heard over the radio and other news media. A bunch of us (caucasian mixed) went to see a land near Mojave Desert where there was lot of water. We went to investigate whether the land was feasable for farming. When we found out it was, we decided to move out there. Then General Dewitt sent a letter of commendation for what I was trying to do but he said he was sorry we could not go there because it was in California and within the military zone.

Q: Then you were thinking of what you could do to help other Japanese move to another area?

A: Yes.

Q: What kind of feelings did you have when you received the evacuation order?

A: It's hard to describe. I felt my responsibility to the Japanese Society. I knew they had done nothing wrong. I had to stick by them to see how things went along. There was a curfew that we Japanese could not travel more than 5 miles at the time but I had a card from the Pasadena Police Dept. giving me permission to go wherever I wanted to go. The Police Dept. counted on me to help them help the Japanese.

Q: How did you go to the Assembly Center?

A: By train to Tulare, Calif. We had Rev. Nicholson who helped make it easy for us to evacuate.

Q: How did you get to the station?

A: Somebody took us and we managed to get there.

Q: After the Assembly Center, where did you go?

A: We went to a War Relocation Center in Arizona. When we got to the Assembly Center in Tulare, the next morning the camp director sent a message that he wanted to consult with me on how to run the center. My thinking was that if farmers and gardeners who were used to outdoor work got confined to a small place, they would get sick. I knew they needed exercise so I taught calisthenics the morning. We started with 20 and ended up with 450 people between the barracks. In the evening, I had "sumo" wrestling going on to keep the youngsters occupied. I worked hard all the time.

Q: At the time of the evacuation, how did your caucasian friends feel about it? Did they make any comments?

A: They said it was a bad thing. At the defense council meeting, I shouted that this is going to be the blackest page in American history and they all agreed.

Q: How did you take care of your house and personal belongings before you evacuated?

A: I rented the house with furnishing and leased the store with all the groceries left in there.

Q: What do you estimate the loss you took because of the evacuation?

A: It's hard to estimate. I lost my livelyhood and lots of material things I stored in the basement. I received \$1,000.00 (one thousand dollars) for compensation but that's not even 10% of my loss. I lost what I made in 20 to 30 years in one day. That was pretty hard. When I came back I worked as a gardener and etcs. and with little foresight I bought an apartment building.

Q: How old were your children?

A: The oldest one graduated University of Nebraska during the war.

Q: Where was he at the time of the evacuation?

A: Dick was enrolled at Pasadena Junior College. He was 18 or 19 years old. Bill was at University of California at Berkeley and my two daughters were in high school.

Q: How did the caucasian churches react to the evacuation?

A: Pasadena as a whole was against the evacuation. The reason was there was no gain for anyone there. In the city, markets were taken over by others and on the farm, others took over. In San Pedro, others took over the fishing business the Japanese had. I think many thought Japanese who were here were not dangerous but they had an economic gain.

Q: In Pasadena, weren't there any economic gain?

A: People lost their gardener and cook over here and that was about all.

Q: Did the churchest make any stand against evacuation?

A: No, I don't think they did.

Q: You mentioned Rev. Nicholson. What church did he serve?

A: The Neighborhood Church at California and Pasadena Ave. He was against the evacuation.

Q: Did he have relation with Japanese churches before the war?

A: No, not until evacuation came.

Q: Then would you say that he had very little contact with Japanese churches until evacuation?

A: That's right.

Q: Did he make a personal stand?

A: Yes, he was a member of the special group of Pasadena Defense Council.

Q: You went to Tular<sup>e</sup> and then to Gila W.R.A. Center?

A: Yes.

Q: What were the centers like?

A: Just like a desert.

W: Was it a racetrack? Did they have barracks?

A: At the Assembly Center, they just had partitions. They cleaned up horse stalls and built some more like it. It was

not fit for humans.

Q: My wife remarked that it was a long walk from the railroad to the place she stayed. In relocation centers, you had barracks covered with tar paper, didn't you?

A: Yes, It was hot.

Q: What do you remember of the Assembly Center and the Relocation Center? Looking back, the psychological aspect of it.

A: I don't know. I had to think of my children. I sent Dick out to school in Lincoln Nebraska in two weeks. I worked in the social welfare office in camp as a truant officer and consultant to the principal.

Q: Did the physical appearance of the locationn upset you?

A: Yes, there was no privacy. I couldn't complain because I was not the only one.

Q: How was the food?

A: I lost weight. I used to weight 145 to 148 lbs. When I left the center, I weighed 125 lbs. Not only the food, I worried about lots of things that had to be done. I was the assistant commander of American Legion consisting of Japanese and caucasians. We met and there was one activity after another. When there was any trouble, as a truant officer , I had to go there immediately. It was a busy life. Being bilingual, there was too much demand.

Q: What else went on in the camp?

A: There was farming. For recreation, there was movies, baseball, tennis and etcs.

Q: What did other Isseis do?

A: They made lot of nice things out of ironwood.

Q: As a truant officer, did you get to know lot of young people?

A: Yes, I did.

Q: How did the young kids feel about the whole thing?

A: They objected. There was trouble there. If the teachers had emotional feelings, it came out in their teaching. The principal, I and the teachers had conferences and we fired a couple of teachers. If they had bias, they were not fit to teach.

Q: Were they caucasian teachers?

A: Yes.

Q: Did you have some trouble with Japanese Teachers?

A: No, they were in the same boat. Mr. Sawyer, he was the head of the education board, he and I became friends. He was a veteran, too. After the war, he came to see me here.

Q: You had the "Loyalty" questionaire. What was your feeling about it?

A: When they asked for volunteers, my stand was that it was up

to the individual.

Q: As a Japanese, how did you feel about it?

A: My philosophy was that even in America, there were lot of imperfections. My vision was to make it work wherever you are.

Q: You mean even in camp life, accept it and make it work?

A: Yes.

Q: How did you feel about Niseis volunteering for the Army?

A: I had no objection.

Q: You were busy in camp but what else did you do for enjoyment?

A: Listened to the radio and read books. My daughter knew I liked to read so she sent me lot of books. I gave Rev. Kawashima one of those philosophy books.

Q: Your job in camp was many, wasn't it?

A: Yes, truant officer and chairman of boy scouts, and etcs. I signed for their requisitions. I was pretty well trusted.

Q: What was religious life like in camp?

A: They had Christian services. Not too many Buddhist services.

Q: Did you continue to go to church services in camp?

A: Not too much because I was called to do so many other services.

There was no Sunday for me in camp.

Q: Among your children, two went to University of Nebraska.

Where did the others go?

A: Elsie went to Dorn (?) College a year later. Because I had three going to college, I had to go out and work. I took Helen who had a year more to go in high school and relocated in Omaha, Nebraska.

Q: Your prime concern was to get your children educated, wasn't it?

A: That's right. Their education came first.

Q: How did you arrange to send the two older children to Nebraska? Did you have any problems?

A: No, that school was open to Japanese. I had to put up one thousand dollars to show that there was enough money for a while. My sons were among the first seven to leave the camp and I had to pay all expenses and I wasn't earning anything.

Q: You were using your savings then, weren't you?

A: That's right. It was hard for me to get my education and I wanted my children to get theirs.

Q: Camp life meant differently to many people. Was there any significance in your camp life?

A: That's a hard question. I never thought deeply on that side. I had many experiences.

Q: Japanese from different areas got together in many families had to part with their children for the first time. Many Japanese in camp together--did this bother you?

A: No, it didn't. All that mattered to me was to get my children educated.

Q: Were you baptized in camp?

A: I was baptized in 1911 in San Francisco.

Q: Did your Christian faith change any?

A: No, it didn't.

Q: Are there anything else you want to say about camp life?

A: No, I don't know what else to say. In conclusion I want to say that I am still kept busy, happy, and still eager to do things worthwhile.

Q: When did you leave Gila W.R.A. Center?

A: I think we stayed in Gila 2 or 3 years. We left Gila in 1943 and we came back to California in 1945.

Q: Did you leave because everyone else was leaving?

A: No, I left because I had to work and put my children through school. If I stayed in camp, I would have had much easier life. To do domestic work was not easy. I went out for the sake of my children.

Q: Where did you go?

A: I went out to Omaha first. I went to work at the home of the President of the Nebraska Power Co. but the Mrs. and I couldn't get along so I had to quit there. She said I had no right to quit but I said this is a democratic country and a person has a right to quit if he wants to. Mr. agreed.

Q: Was that job arranged for you before you left camp?

A: Yes.

Q: Were you a houseboy? Was your wife with you?

A: I did cooking, chauffering and etcs. My wife was with me.

Q: Did you have contact with churches while you were out there?

A: Yes, there was a church across the street from where I worked in Lincoln, Nebraska. We went there.

Q: How did people receive you?

A: Just like anyone else. They had no prejudice in Lincoln, Nebraska.

Q: Were you in Lincoln, Nebraska when most Japanese returned to the West Coast?

A: We were allowed to return to California in January 1945. However, I waited for Helen's graduation and returned together few months later.

Q: In Pasadena, did you have to find another location for your church?

A: No, our church was still there intact.

Q: Who watched the church property while you were gone?

A: A lady named Miss Fanning. She was formerly a missionary to Japan.

Q: And your members left together, went to same camp, and returned so you didn't have much problem there?

A: That's right.

Q: Did you sense any change of feeling in the neighborhood?

A: No, they were glad to see me. They saved up and gave me some ration stamps.

Q: Did they welcome you back?

A: Sure. I was one of them who started there.

Q: Did Helen, your youngest child, graduate high school in Nebraska?

A: Helen graduated high school there, returned to Pasadena and entered Pasadena City College. Helen gave the graduation speech when she graduated high school in Nebraska. She was there only one year.

Q: All your children graduated with honors and Helen was valedictorian?

A: Yes.

Q: When you came back, you had no trouble finding a job as a gardener? Was other jobs available?

A: No. My caucasian friends said it's too bad I had to do gardening with all my education but it was the quickest way to get started.

Q: How long did you do gardening?

A: I think it was almost 10 years.

Q: Did you do any grocery business after you came back?

A: No, I knew I couldn't compete with chain stores.

Q: Can you summarize what was the hardest to get adjusted to since you returned?

A: I can't summarize. Ever since I left Japan, it was all hard work. Nothing was easy and I don't regret it. It's not so hard to get adjusted.

Q: You had an apartment. What did you do with it?

A: I sold it to the city. The upstair was converted into a friendship hostel.

Q: As a Christian, what is your hope for the future?

A: My hope is world peace and concern for all people regardless of race or religion.

Q: Do you feel that Christianity in the Japanese community has failed?

A: I think it has failed quite a bit. For example, they have their own standard and look down on others who are below their standard.

Q: Is this a carry over from Japanese culture?

A: Maybe, but I am different and I don't feel that way.

Q: Does this exist among the Isseis?

A: Yes, among Isseis and there might be some among Niseis. I don't know because I don't mingle with Niseis too much now days.

Q: Among the Isseis, is there this caste system?

A: Not all of them are that way but quite a few are.

Q: Are church members politically orientated?

A: I think some are. Few can create lot of commotion.

Q: In our ethnic churches, I have a feeling that we missed the boat among our young people. Do you think that our Nisei parents are not involving themselves so much and not teaching Christian religion to their children?

A: I can't say all but some Niseis do not get involved in anything. I liked to get involved but some Isseis also do not get involved.

Q: My feeling is that some thing that they do things but can't

please everyone so they sit back. There is that feeling among Japanese.

A: I think their is that feeling among caucasians, too.

Q: We have the problem of Sanseis slowly drifting away from church. I think the Niseis have to involve themselves more in the church.

A: I think they don't. For instance, when they showed the evacuation pictures at the Pasadena Art Museum, one Sunday I was called to help and I went. I'm sure some J.A.C.L. members were called too, but I didn't see any of them or our Niseis. I was an outsider but I asked what happened to the J.A.C.L. members. They said they didn't know. Niseis in Pasadena don't involve themselves in anything. They don't have the spirit to get involved and get enjoyment out of it. That's where they have failed the Sanseis. Sanseis like to get involved.

Q: Do you think the war had something to do with it?

A: Maybe, but I'm not a psychologist so I don't know. I am just saying the fact. Niseis should do certain amount. An old man like me has to take part. I can't tell them what to do.

Q: We seem like we have enough talents in the church.

A: Yes, we have but they would not use it. I am willing to cooperate. We did pretty well at the church bazaar. I am too old to be their leader but I like to cooperate.

Q: Then, where we are failing is that we do not get involved.

A: That's my personal feeling.

"The End"